



Francis Marion *National Forest* Final Forest Plan

The Francis Marion National Forest, located within an hour's drive of Charleston, is enjoyed by thousands of people every year. Encompassing 259,000 acres along South Carolina's coast, this natural area provides a wide array of ecological, economic and social benefits including: clean air and water; recreation; wildlife and plant habitat; beautiful scenery; solitude; forest products such as timber; and more.

Why is a Forest Plan Important?

The Forest Service has revised the Francis Marion National Forest's 1996 Land Management Plan, commonly known as the forest plan. The 1996 forest plan focused on managing the Francis Marion National Forest (referred to as the Francis Marion) in the wake of Hurricane Hugo. In the last 20 years the communities have grown and changed, which has created different public values and needs. The revised forest plan recognizes the challenges associated with change, and the need to work across boundaries to address them.

A forest plan does not prescribe site-specific actions or projects. Rather, it provides broad, long-term goals and priorities that will guide Forest Service managers for the next 10 to 15 years. Local managers develop projects that implement forest plan goals and priorities.

How is this Final Forest Plan Different?

Restore Native Ecological Systems and Adapt to Changing Climate Conditions

The Forest Service worked closely with partners to identify native plant and animal communities (ecosystems) and how to maintain and restore the nine ecosystems on the forest. A major emphasis is to return fire to the landscape that should restore fire-adapted ecosystems. Management activities will improve ecosystem diversity by conserving habitat for nine federally listed species and 67 species of conservation concern.



Francis Marion National Forest after Hurricane Hugo in 1989



Francis Marion National Forest today

Notably restoring longleaf pine will increase foraging and nesting habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and improve migration routes for the threatened frosted flatwoods salamander. Highly diverse functioning longleaf pine communities are resilient to high winds, drought and insect outbreaks. Actively managed forests have less risk of wildfire, sequester carbon and provide timber products that create jobs.



Restore Waterflow and Hydrologic Function

Maintaining and improving waterflow and hydrologic function are two additional emphasis areas in this revised forest plan. More than half of the Francis Marion is in riparian areas (e.g., swamps, wetlands, floodplains, marsh etc.) where the soil near the surface is saturated or covered with water.

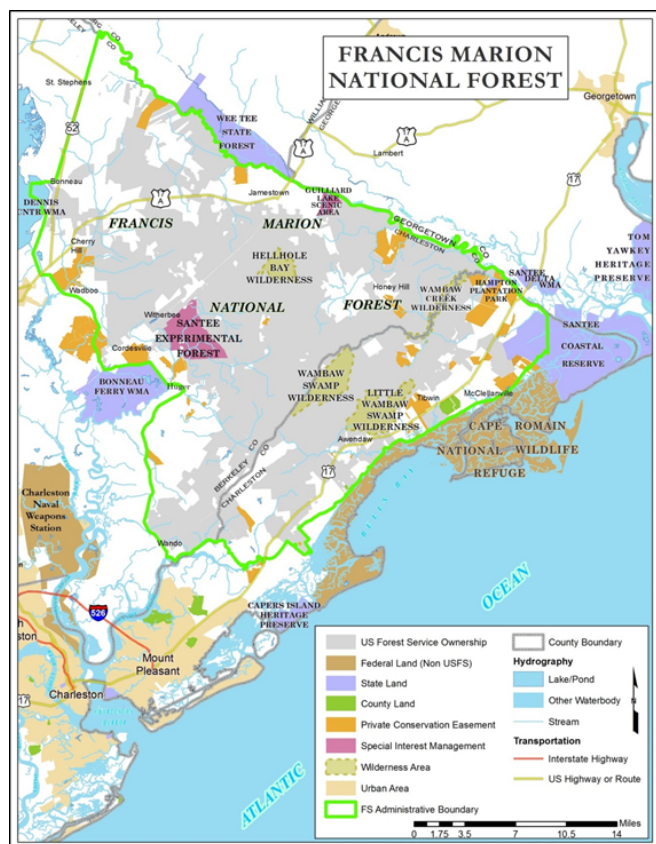
Waterflows were altered as streams were diverted or wetlands drained by ditching and installing culverts. Restoring waterflow within riparian areas will provide for flood control, groundwater recharge and habitat for many rare plants and animals.

Prescribed Fire

The plan establishes a long-term goal of increasing prescribed burning to 30,000-50,000 acres per year. This increase will not only restore historic fire regimes that support plant and animal habitats, but will also reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire near developments and homes in the administrative area.

Social and Economic Benefits

The Francis Marion provides numerous places where visitors can get outdoors and learn about local history. This plan establishes four resource integration zones, each with its own desired conditions for ecosystem restoration, sustainable recreation, partnerships and public services and benefits, including multiple uses.



This forest plan establishes a commitment to an "all lands" approach to work across boundaries with partners. Many of the restoration goals outlined above will lead to a steady flow of timber products that support local communities. Also, aligning recreation opportunities with user demands, the forest's niche and our ability to maintain roads, trails and facilities will provide high-quality recreation experiences for forest visitors and lead to greater connections between the state, counties and nearby communities. The revised forest plan emphasizes the maintenance of Forest Service roads that connect rural residents to nearby cities and towns.

Location of the Plan Area

The Francis Marion National Forest borders South Carolina's coast, with easy access from US Highway 17 and I-26. Located within Berkeley and Charleston counties, the forest is surrounded by the Santee River to the north, the Intracoastal Waterway to the east and Lake Moultrie and the Cooper River to the west.

Where to go for more information

A copy of the draft plan, the draft environmental impact statement and other information can be found on the web at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/scnfs/fmplan.

The revised forest plan will be posted on this website when it is released (mid to late August). To learn more about the Francis Marion and Sumter National Forests, go to www.usda.gov/scnfs.



John "Rick" Lint
Forest Supervisor
803.561.4081
rlint@fs.fed.us

**Francis Marion and
Sumter National Forests**
4931 Broad River Road
Columbia, SC 29212